Alternative Response

Program description:

Alternative Response (also called Family Assessment Response or Differential Response) is a system of responding to referrals to Child Protective Services that is an *alternative* to a traditional investigation. If there are no imminent concerns about a child's safety, the Alternative Response method conducts a family assessment, with the goal of engaging a family to determine strengths and needs and plan for the future, without requiring a determination that maltreatment has occurred or that the child is at risk of maltreatment. It is perceived by some as less intrusive and less confrontational than a traditional investigation.

Typical age of primary program participant: 8

Typical age of secondary program participant: N/A

Meta-Analysis of Program Effects

Outcomes Measured	Primary or Second-ary Partici-pant	No. of Effect Sizes	Unadjusted Effect Sizes (Random Effects Model)			Adjusted Effect Sizes and Standard Errors Used in the Benefit-Cost Analysis					
						First time ES is estimated			Second time ES is estimated		
			ES	SE	p-value	ES	SE	Age	ES	SE	Age
Child abuse and neglect	P	3	-0.09	0.03	0.00	-0.08	0.03	8	-0.08	0.03	9
Out-of-home placement	P	2	-0.30	0.12	0.01	-0.18	0.12	8	-0.18	0.12	9

Benefit-Cost Summary

| The estimates shown are present value, life cycle benefits and costs. All dollars are expressed in the base year chosen for this analysis (2011). The economic discount rates and other relevant parameters are described in Technical Appendix 2.	Program Benefits					Costs	Summary Statistics			
	Partici-pants	Tax-payers	Other	Other Indirect	Total Benefits		Benefit to Cost Ratio	Return on Invest-ment	Benefits Minus Costs	Probability of a positive net present value
	$330	$257	$134	$131	$852	-$96	$8.88	36%	$756	100%

Detailed Monetary Benefit Estimates

	Benefits to:				
Source of Benefits	Partici-pants	Tax-payers	Other	Other In-direct	Total Benefits
From Primary Participant					
Crime	$0	$47	$135	$23	$206
Earnings via high school graduation	$57	$21	$0	$10	$88
Earnings via test scores	$32	$12	$0	$6	$50
Child abuse and neglect	$235	$30	$0	$15	$281
Out-of-home placement	$0	$123	$0	$61	$184
K-12 special education	$0	$12	$0	$6	$17
Earnings via alcohol disorder	$3	$1	$0	$1	$5
Health care costs for alcohol disorder	$0	$0	$0	$0	$1
Earnings via illicit drug disorder	$0	$0	$0	$0	$1
Health care costs for illicit drug disorder	$0	$1	$0	$0	$2
Earnings via depressive disorder	$3	$1	$0	$1	$4
Health care costs via depressive disorder	$1	$4	$3	$2	$10
Health care costs via education	-$1	$10	-$7	$5	$6

Detailed Cost Estimates

The figures shown are estimates of the costs to implement programs in Washington. The comparison group costs reflect either no treatment or treatment as usual, depending on how effect sizes were calculated in the meta-analysis. The uncertainty range is used in Monte Carlo risk analysis, described in Technical Appendix 2.	**Program Costs**			**Comparison Costs**			**Summary Statistics**	
	Annual Cost	Program Duration	Year Dollars	Annual Cost	Program Duration	Year Dollars	Present Value of Net Program Costs (in 2011 dollars)	Uncertainty (+ or – %)
	$92	1	2008	$0	1	2008	$96	10%

Source: The two major evaluations of Alternative Response systems that reported costs found different results in their analyses. In the Minnesota evaluation, the observed costs for Alternative Response clients were slightly *lower* than those for clients receiving service-as-usual. In Ohio, the observed costs for Alternative Response clients were slightly *higher* than those for clients receiving service-as-usual. To be cautious, we have used the per-family estimates from the Ohio evaluation (Loman et al., 2010).

Cumulative Net Cash Flows Over Time (Non-Discounted Dollars)
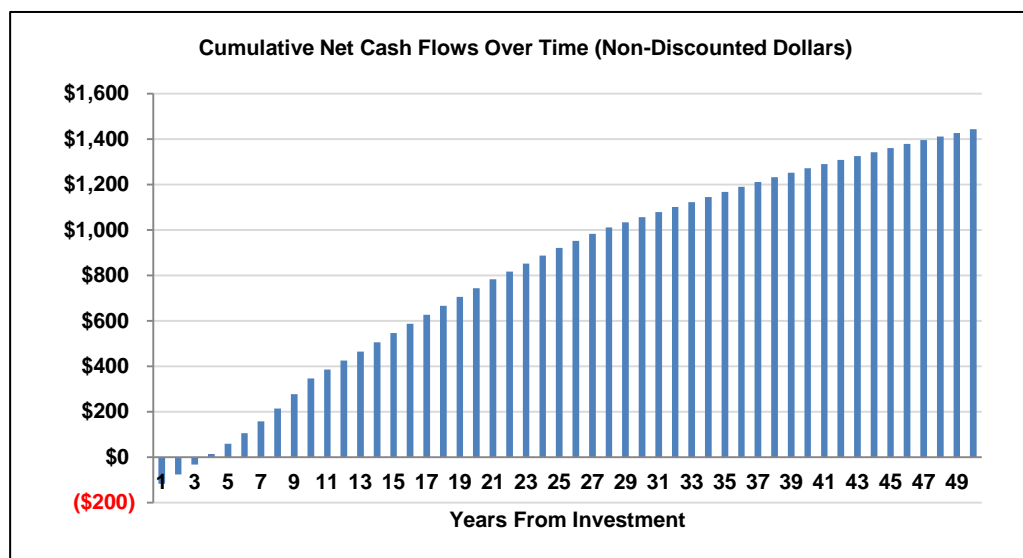
Multiplicative Adjustments Applied to the Meta-Analysis

Type of Adjustment	Multiplier
1- Less well-implemented comparison group or observational study, with some covariates.	0.5
2- Well-implemented comparison group design, often with many statistical controls.	0.5
3- Well-done observational study with many statistical controls (e.g., instrumental variables).	0.81
4- Random assignment, with some implementation issues.	0.81
5- Well-done random assignment study.	1.00
Program developer = researcher	0.25
Unusual (not "real-world") setting	0.5
Weak measurement used	0.54

The adjustment factors for these studies are based on a multivariate regression analysis of 106 effect sizes from evaluations of home visiting programs within child welfare or at-risk populations. The analysis examined the relative magnitude of effect sizes for studies rated a 1, 2, 3, or 4 research design quality, in comparison with a 5 (see Technical Appendix II for a description of these ratings). We weighted the model using the random effects inverse variance weights for each effect size. The results indicated that research designs 1 and 2 have effect sizes about twice the size of studies rated as a 5, and research designs 3 and 4 have effect sizes about 24 percent higher than a 5.

The analysis also found that effect sizes were statistically significantly higher when the program developer was involved in the research evaluation, or when a weak outcome measure was used.

Studies Used in the Meta-Analysis

Institute of Applied Research. (2006, November). *Extended follow-up study of Minnesota's family assessment response: Final report*. St. Louis, MO: Author.

Loman, L.A., Filonow, C.S., & Siegel, G. (2010). *Ohio alternative response pilot project evaluation: Final report*. St. Louis, MO: Institute of Applied Research.

Ruppel, J., Huang, Y., Haulenbeek, G. (2011). *Differential Response in Child Protective Services in New York State: Implementation, Inial Outcomes and Impacts of Pilot Project.* Albany: New York State Office of Children and Family Services.